

Dimensions of the Preschool Education Environment in Montenegro

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Abstract

*Within the project “Effects of the Reform Changes on the Preschool Education Context in Montenegro”, the observations of education process were conducted in preschools, in three regions, on the total sample of 99 units (educational groups). This paper highlights the positive effects that are a result of the reform process in the Montenegrin preschool education, but it also identifies problems/challenges in realizing the programme objectives and activities. In order to objectively assess practical activities in different age groups, the Scale for observing the education process in preschool institutions was used, with a focus on the identification of indicators of more complex categories (interaction, diversity and democratic values, teaching strategies, learning environment, planning). With the intention of collecting relevant information about the current state of the kindergarten in the domain of educational work, a series of interviews were conducted, and then the teachers’ opinions and suggestions regarding the possible ways of improving teaching methodology practices in preschool institutions in Montenegro were marked. The study shows that the largest number of indicators is on the level of **quality practices** (on the scale 1=inadequate to 4= a step forward), so the measures towards the improvement of practice are suggested. It is necessary to adjust the number of children in educational groups with pedagogical standards, provide continuous training of professional staff, and improve educators’ teamwork in order to ensure much better life quality in preschool institutions.*

Key words: age group; educator; preschool institution; quality of work; upbringing and education process.

Introduction

Early childhood, the period from birth to school age, is increasingly drawing the attention of researchers who deal with the issues of development and the overall potential of children in preschool age. Psychologists, educators and, in general, scientists and experts focused on the capacity of early childhood as an important and integral part of the development of personality, in the last decades of the last century and early in this century, suggested that the early start of working on the establishment of connections between neurons inevitably leads to a better realization of child's innate potential (Rajević, 2009). This potential does not work and develop by itself and on its own. Great care, appropriate support and support of each individual child, are perceived as necessary, both on the family and social level. Therefore, it is natural to observe the child as a whole and in interaction with others and the environment (Vonta, 2009).

In her study from 2007, *Context of the institution for early education – a holistic approach*, Biserka Petrović-Sočo claims that the context of the institution of early education is like a “living organism” (Stoll and Fink, 2000, p.36 as cited in Petrović-Sočo, 2007), that acts as an interactive network of social, cultural, environmental and temporal relationships with which the child constantly interacts.

There is no doubt that children start schooling with a number of previously formed concepts, not “from a scratch”, and that earlier, preschool stages of growing up are not merely preparatory or insignificant for further development (Mićanović, 2003). Therefore, the importance of early childhood development is now being taken more and more seriously, and there is a prevailing “opinion that young children need special attention because they are fundamentally different from adults. Understanding human development and functioning of the brain simultaneously improves the quality of programmes and teaching practices for children” (Walsh, 2001, p. 16). The traditional attitude towards preschool institutions for children, as babysitting facilities, or small schools, now gives way to a more flexible concept of kindergarten as an “open system” focused on children. The child is now seen from a holistic point of view as an integral, special unity of abilities, interests, needs, family assumptions, so that projections and actualization of its full potential are possible only with adequate support of peers and adults, and their bonding (Tankersley, Brajković, & Handžar, 2011).

Only through intertwining different natural environments, children have the opportunity to realize their own needs and interests, to get to know themselves, others and the wider environment. This holistic approach focuses on the child as a system, as a unity of developmental aspects interacting with the environment, and as Malaguzzi points out, criticizing behaviourally-oriented educational models: “A hundred is there. The child is a creation of a hundred. The child has a hundred languages, a hundred hands, thoughts, ways of thinking, a hundred ways of playing, speaking, listening, wondering, loving, singing, understanding a hundred worlds to discover and a hundred of dreams ... The child has a hundred languages (and again hundreds and hundreds more) but they steal ninety-nine of them. School and culture separate the head from the body! They tell him or her to think without hands, to do without head, to listen and

not speak, to understand with no joy, to love and to admire...” (Miljak, 2009, p. 11). In these metaphorical statements by Malaguzzi, we find the key reasons for shifting the focus of educational intervention from fragmented contents to integrated activities, from the teacher to the child, from kindergarten as a closed institution to an open institution for children, which becomes an integral part of a broader social context. For such a big redirection and an essential change in upbringing and educational practices in preschools we should gradually adopt a new paradigm of learning and understanding, and agents of the changes need not and cannot be only the people from the outside, “but also those who create the daily practice and who are involved in it” (Šagud, 2006, p. 37).

Changes in the Montenegrin Preschool Context

In 2000, the state officially set the basic conceptual assumptions of the educational system in Montenegro, starting with preschool and ending with secondary education. Innovations in the system of preschool education were related primarily to the establishment of more flexible and open space-time organization of work, partnership with families and the community in terms of active participation and exchange between all stakeholders with the purposes of deinstitutionalizing the system and adjusting it to the living context. The pre-reform model of preschool education in Montenegro was rather closed, didactically prescribed in detail, prescriptively designed and unified, so educators did not have autonomy and professional freedom to operationalize the curriculum according to the context in which they worked.

Instead of a closed, content-based curriculum, the state adopted the basic programme as a reference for a curricular framework for developing the programme goals across the development areas (Programme for Areas of Activities in Preschool Education, 2004, 2007, the Ministry of Education and the Bureau for Education of Montenegro). Educators were given the opportunity to rely on their professional judgment, insights and knowledge about their working context, and to adapt and be “flexible” when it comes to the open goal-process structure of the curriculum. Stimulation of specialized programmes is one way to facilitate a diversification of the offer to children and parents, and to respect the wishes and needs of all the concerned parties. In Montenegro, preschool education, as an integral part of a unified education system, is gradually becoming more socially visible and more important (slowly, though) in the context of the reform changes. Although the percentage of enrolment of preschool children in institutional social forms of education is not satisfactory and remains below expectations and the existing European standards (only 30% in Montenegro), it is more than obvious that qualitatively significant changes have occurred in the last decades of the 20th century and earlier in this century in the specified area (Villegas & Reimers, 2000). The rate of coverage of children at an early age in preschool institutions has increased by ten percent (from 20% to 30%), with the introduction of shorter and specialized programmes in public preschools, also the first licensed private kindergartens and nurseries which follow the internationally-recognized Montessori programme. One of the crucial changes that occurred as a result of the contemporary paradigms of learning,

which is inevitable in the reformed educational system, is the openness of preschool institutions from the “outside and inside”. All this has had positive repercussions on the larger coverage of children of early ages within the institutionalized upbringing and educational processes. On the other hand, the training of teachers, in the Montenegrin context, is given intensive attention through various forms of professional development and training, within the Institute of Education and the Ministry of Education, but also within preschool institutions, in order to “broaden professional, methodological, theoretical and practical” knowledge and competences of our educators (Mićanović, 2012, p. 51). Also, at the level of initial education of future educators, there have occurred functional changes in terms of broadening the curriculum and its alignment with modern tendencies in preschool educational systems. To be honest, professional beliefs of educators, i.e. their “implicit and/or folk pedagogies”, their personal theories of learning, are changing slowly and gradually, in their own way.

Since the current preschool context in Montenegro has changed and is harmonized with modern scientific trends in this area (Strategy of early and preschool education in Montenegro, 2010-2015) and, as such, is compatible with other segments of the education vertical line, we tried to take a look at various dimensions of the reformed environment in the study that was conducted on a sample of 99 educational groups in different cities, in each of the three regions of Montenegro. The survey was conducted within the project “*Effects of the Reform Changes on the Preschool Education Context in Montenegro*” in 2012 and 2013.

Methods

Study Scope and Purpose

In a part of our project, focused on the evaluation of reform changes in the field of preschool education in Montenegro, a significant segment of the overall research subject referred to the observation of educational process in different age groups in kindergartens in Montenegro. *The main hypothesis is: It is assumed that upbringing and education in Montenegrin preschool institutions substantially correspond to the key reform demands/tasks in the fields of learning, curriculum implementation, and professional preparation of teachers for implementing the reform objectives.*

Within this hypothesis, the focus was on a specific target/sub-hypothesis: It is assumed that, in the domain of the immediate upbringing and educational practices, there is a qualitatively significant development in the fields of interactive forms of learning, process of individualization and democratization of educational work, learning environment, but also that serious efforts lie ahead on the path of building a more suitable preschool environment focused on children of all age.

In line with the hypotheses, the observation areas were defined:

- a) qualifications of educators for a high-quality interaction with children in the early age, understanding and acceptance of diversity as a starting point in the educational activity, by using modern teaching strategies and creating an adequate environment for learning;

b) professional routes and paths of educators' work and methods of implementing the fundamental reform ideas into practice, with the use of modern teaching strategies and creation of learning environment, which is in line with various participants in preschool institution context.

Among other empirical methods, observation activities in different age groups were chosen in order to get an objective idea about the real situation with regard to the focused problem. Trying to collect as much relevant information as possible about the current situation in kindergartens regarding the immediate realization of educational work in Montenegro, both teachers' opinions and suggestions about the possible ways of improving the teaching methodology practices in preschool institutions were gathered.

Sample

The sample included 9 kindergartens, with 99 educational groups, from nursery to older preschool group, in all three Montenegrin regions (29 from the southern, 59 from the central and 11 from the northern region). This was a deliberate and a convenient sample that involved only kindergartens; convenient since the study was conducted in institutions (kindergartens) from all the three regions and with the teachers (99 in total) who were willing to be observed and to participate in the study along with the kindergarten pedagogues and principals.

For the purpose of analysing the studied problem, we tried to include a large number of preschool institutions from all the three regions in Montenegro. That is why three cities from each region were chosen (Northern region: Berane, Bijelo Polje and Pljevlja; Central region: Nikšić, Podgorica and Cetinje, Southern region: Bar, Budva, Herceg Novi).

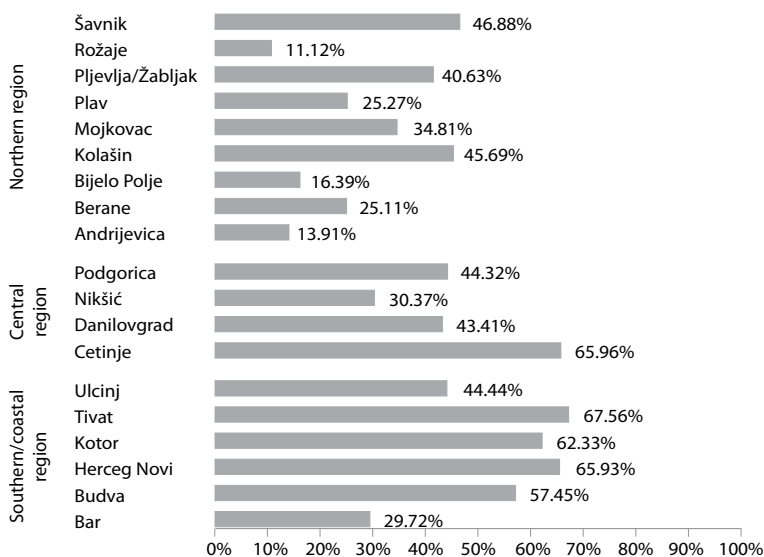


Figure 1. The number of children aged 3-5 years in preschool education, by municipalities (Strategy of early and preschool education in Montenegro, 2010-2015, p. 13)

The sample consisted of 99 preschool units out of which the largest number of educational activities was observed in the central region - 59 educational groups (Podgorica, Nikšić and Cetinje), to be followed by the southern region - 29 educational groups (Bar, Budva and Herceg Novi) and the northern region - 11 educational groups (Pljevlja, Bijelo Polje and Berane). The reason why we opted for this kind of sample dispersion lies in the fact that the enrolment of children in organized preschool institutions is dominant in the central region. It is first followed by the southern region and then by the northern region, so the goal was not to make comparisons between the regions, but to determine a dominant image of the organization of work with the youngest in the Montenegrin education system (Figure 1).

Instrument

An observation protocol (*Tankersley, Brajković, & Handžar, 2011, ISSA-ina definicija kvalitetne pedagoške prakse - Koraci prema kvalitetnoj praksi*) and a short interview questionnaire were used in the study. The protocol helped us collect some general data about institutions, educational groups, number of children in the group, and the participation of adults in the process of education. In addition to the general data, the protocol contained the indicators for assessing diversity and democratic values, learning and planning the environment. The questionnaire for interviewing the teachers who participated in the observation was related to the reforms in the organization and approach to the implementation of educational work, support in the process of teaching, openness and readiness of kindergarten teachers to change and create work in which children will choose activities (the developmentally-oriented curriculum).

The observation protocol, in its part considering the applicability of the indicators, had four options for assessing each indicator (1 - inadequate, 2 - good start, 3 - quality practice, 4 - a step forward).

Process of the Study and Presentation of the Results

The study was organized by the authors of this paper. The observation procedure (30-45 minutes) was simultaneously conducted by two researchers, who independently monitored the educational activities and identified the observation protocol indicators. Upon the observation itself, the impressions about monitored activities were analyzed and the prevalence of specific indicators was determined. After the observation of educational activities, interviews were conducted with the teachers whose groups had been visited. The interviews lasted from 15 to 30 minutes and were conducted after the working hours. Data were collected during 2012 and 2013.

This paper presents the frequencies and percentages, as the statistical indicators of variables, based on which the models of good practice can clearly be seen, as well as the problems that hinder or call into question the feasibility of high-quality educational work in preschool institutions. Quantitative indicators were complemented by a descriptive analysis of the studied problem and the respondents' opinions (i.e. opinions of the teachers whose activities were observed), which objectified the picture of the studied phenomena in preschool practice.

Results and Discussion

To determine one of the important variables regarding the sustainability of the organization and implementation of educational work at an early age, the number of children in educational groups in the given sample was found out (Table 1). It is important to note that the researchers reported the number of children who were present in the group at the time of observation; all the groups had significantly more children enrolled when compared to those present on that day in the group - this number often fluctuates depending on weather conditions and children's health conditions.

Table 1

Representation of the kindergarten groups with the number of children in different age groups

Age group	Number of children per group						total
	Less than 14	15 to 20	21 to 25	26 to 30	31 to 35	36 and more	
younger (3-4 years)	5 20.8%	6 25.0%	5 20.8%	3 12.5%	4 16.7%	1 4.2%	24 100%
middle (4-5 years)	4 14.3%	10 35.7%	4 14.3%	4 14.3%	3 10.7%	3 10.7%	28 100%
older (5-6 years)	2 5%	3 7.5%	6 15.0%	12 30.0%	10 25.0%	7 17.5%	40 100%
mixed (3-6 years)	0 .0%	2 50.0%	1 25.0%	1 25.0%	0 .0%	0 .0%	4 100%
nursery (2-3 years)	0 .0%	2 66.7%	0 .0%	1 33.3%	0 .0%	0 .0%	3 100%
Total (2-6 years)	11 11.1%	23 23.2%	16 16.2%	21 21.2%	17 17.2%	11 11.1%	99 100%

Since pedagogical norms on the number of children in groups are marked as mandatory through legislation, namely The Law on Preschool Education ("Official Gazette of the Republic of Montenegro" No. 49/2007), it is important to note that the enrolment standards are as follows: 12 children in a group of zero to two years of age, 14 for children from two to three years, 10 children in a mixed group of children up to three years of age, 20 for children aged three to four years, 24 for groups of children four to five years old, 25 children for a group five to six years of age and 20 for children in mixed groups three to six years old. The given norms were determined in accordance with the developmental specificities of preschool children and are obligatory by the legislation. We used that as a starting point in analyzing the current situation in Montenegrin preschool institutions. In relation to the norms according to age groups, the present study showed that, out of 24 groups in the younger group, 11 groups (45.8%) were within the given limits, while 13 groups or 54.2% of the sample were above the mentioned limits, which means that approximately half of the preschool groups at a younger age worked in unsuitable conditions. When it comes to the medium educational group,

we can see that the situation was somewhat better, because 18 groups (64.3%) had the number of children within the permissible limits, i.e. up to 24 children in the group, while the remaining 10 educational groups (35.7%) had more children than they should have. Speaking about the older preschool children, we see a different situation, so there were only 11 educational groups (27.5%) within the pedagogical norms (up to 25 children per group), while 29 groups (72.5%) were above the prescribed number. As for the mixed groups (3-6 years old), 2 groups (50%) were within the standard limits, while 50% were above the limit (more than 20 children per group). Considering the youngest age groups, all three of them (100%) were in the category of more than 14 children in the group, which exceeded the projected pedagogical norm.

At the general level, it can be pointed out that the number of children in educational groups in many cases exceeds the allowed standards, which significantly complicates the work of educators. Therefore, in order to take a better approach to the work with preschool aged children, it is necessary to consider the above-mentioned standards, in terms of the number of children in educational groups, because this is the only way in which we can functionally (re)-affirm the guiding principles of modern educational paradigm of learning.

Table 2

Length of the observation of the activities in a group

Age group	Up to 30 minutes	Up to 45 minutes	Total
younger	18 75.0%	6 25.0%	24 100%
middle	24 82.8%	5 17.2%	29 100%
older	28 71.8%	11 28.2%	39 100%
mixed	2 50.0%	2 50.0%	4 100%
nursery	3 100%	0 .0%	3 100%
Total	75 75.8%	24 24.2%	99 100%

As can be seen in Table 2, the observations of the educational process in the nursery and kindergarten groups in the preschool institutions in Montenegro ranged from 30 to 45 minutes, with the predominant first category – up to 30 minutes. Thus, the observation of educational activities in 75 educational groups (75.8%) took up to 30 minutes, and in 24 groups (24.2%) it took up to 45 minutes.

Practice shows that it is essential for children in an early age to pay much more attention to the activities that require asking questions, because asking questions often leads to thinking about the problem itself (Polonsky, Freedman, Leshner, & Morrison, 2002). Interaction is essential for the establishment of a dialogue through which the child expresses his or her own opinion and develops communication skills. By asking different types of questions, educators and parents inspire children to question and to think at a

higher level (Steel & Temple, 2000, p. 85). These are good ways, methods and procedures at their early age through which children learn the art of proper establishment of connections and relationships between components in a problem situation, that is, when they develop the ability of functional thinking. There are extremely important reflexive and metacognitive questions that encourage children to review and assess the effectiveness of their own actions and the selection of appropriate procedures for further action.

Table 3

Frequency of the indicators of interaction in the educational work in the group

Indicators of interaction	1	2	3	4	total
The teacher realizes interaction and expresses his or her expectations from children in accordance with the process of child development and learning.	6 6.1%	30 30.6%	48 49.0%	14 14.3%	98 100%
The teacher fosters frequent interactions during the day with each child, supports his or her strengths and encourages his or her learning and development.	5 5.1%	25 25.5%	53 54.1%	15 15.3%	98 100%
The teacher interacts with each child in a way that corresponds to his or her emotional, social, physical and cognitive abilities, strengths and needs.	5 5.2%	31 32.0%	50 51.5%	11 11.3%	97 100%
The teacher creates a situation in which children have a choice and in which their choice is realized and respected.	7 7.1%	29 29.6%	54 55.1%	8 8.2%	98 100%
The teacher encourages interaction among children which enhances their social development, mutual understanding, mutual support and a sense of community.	10 10.2%	24 24.5%	57 58.2%	7 7.1%	98 100%
The teacher offers activities in which children learn to distinguish and recognize their own feelings and the feelings of others and talk about them.	7 7.4%	37 38.9%	44 46.3%	7 7.4%	95 100%
The teacher promotes democratic values by encouraging each child to appropriately express his or her own opinions and participate in decision-making.	11 11.2%	41 41.8%	39 39.8%	7 7.1%	98 100%
The teacher supports the development of language and communication skills of each child in different ways every day.	7 7.2%	34 35.1%	48 49.5%	8 8.2%	97 100%
The teacher expresses appreciation and respect in social interactions with families, colleagues and community members and thus promotes this kind of interaction.	8 9.0%	38 42.7%	36 40.4%	7 7.9%	89 100%
Summary results for the presence of all the indicators of interaction	66 7.6%	289 33.3%	429 49.4%	84 9.7%	868 100%

1 – inadequate 2 – good start 3 – quality practice 4 – a step forward

During the observations, a detailed protocol had been prepared and special attention was paid to the prevalence of specific indicators in each stage of teachers and children's activities. It is important to point out that, from the total of nine indicators of interaction monitored on a sample of 99 kindergarten units, in none of the groups were all the indicators identified. Due to this, column "total" shows that the sample varied, because

in this case, the difference between the total number of observed units (99) and displayed units shows the number of units in which the authors did not identify any particular indicator (Table 3). The representation of the indicators of interaction in the educational process, at an early age (individualized expectations of children, respect for diversity, taking into account the developmental aspects, achievement of mutual understanding, respect of family culture), according to the results of our observations and marked fields in the scale, in most cases was at the level of *quality practice* (49.4%), which is, we conclude, a qualitatively significant step forward and a positive indicator, especially if we take into account a number of aggravating factors (excessive number of children in groups, not enough space for various activities, inadequate teaching materials, etc.). However, a significant percentage (33.3%) of interactions was at the level of *good start*, while 7.6% of situations were marked as *inadequate*. When it comes to indicator no. 3, which refers to the creation of interactions in favour of children's holistic development aspects, the researchers predominantly marked category 3, i.e. *quality practice* (51.5%). By applying the current curriculum in practice, teachers seek to functionally link the objectives and contents through different life-practical and complex activities. Also, the working environment is structured according to the centres of interest, allowing teachers to comprehensively view, monitor, reflect and create complex interactions between children and adults. Option 3, i.e. *quality practice*, dominated in the next indicator (4), which refers to the creation of opportunities for choice, so the teachers in the selected preschools tend to model appropriate learning centres with sufficiently varied, natural, semi- and unstructured materials and didactics. In the educational process, in the focus groups, dominated the option of *quality practice* in terms of experience/assessment of our researchers in the field of affirmation of positive self-image in children and developing good reciprocity, a sense of community and co-operative relations (indicator 5: 58.2%). Also, to a lesser extent, in the category of *quality practice*, the dominant number of researchers' choices was found in relation to indicator no. 8, aimed at the children's development of language and communication skills. Teachers are trying to listen to children, to talk to them, ask them open-ended questions, encourage them to correct expression and reflection. Also, by varying the different forms of work, they encourage children to mutual exchange, consultation, clarifying different ideas and viewpoints, as well as the assumption and prediction of solutions in some situations. Only in the last indicator in the present scale of interactions the second option was found, i.e. *good start* dominated the researchers' perception and assessment (42.7%). Thus, the results suggest that teachers insufficiently involve parents and community members in the creation and implementation of permanent educational activities in preschool institutions, without recognizing the importance of detection of specific skills, interests and knowledge of family members, which could contribute to the overall quality of the educational process. These data indicated the need for a review of practices, seeking ways of improving skills and competences, and, of course, professional motivation of teachers and other stakeholders in the kindergarten educational environment. Gutek (2004) believes that

it is necessary to further educate preschool teachers by applying the principles of the new philosophy, ideology and access to education. In addition to the required training, which should be systematically dedicatedly and continuously provided to educators, it would be necessary to provide better working conditions, and to promote the profession, which would contribute to the altered implicit pedagogy professionals and their more committed professional and overall engagement.

The study showed that a very small number of teachers interacted at the level of “a step forward” (on average below 10%, i.e. 9.7%), being examples of good practice, that is the child-centred teaching. These examples represent a step towards the transformative practice and shows how teachers can expand instruction to motivate others for more creative engagement and beyond, systemic changes in the educational environment (Tankersley, Brajković, & Handžar, 2011).

Table 4
Frequency of the indicators of differences and democratic values in the educational work of teachers

Indicators of differences and democratic values	1	2	3	4	Total
The teacher treats children with consideration and respect and allows them equal opportunities for involvement in the community.	4 4.0%	26 26.3%	53 53.5%	16 16.2%	99 100%
The teacher encourages children to treat others impartially, equally, with consideration and respect, and to expect the same from others.	6 6.5%	37 40.2%	40 43.5%	9 9.8%	92 100%
Summary results for the representation of both indicators of diversity and democratic values	10 5.2%	63 33.0%	93 48.7%	25 13.1%	191 100%

1 – inadequate 2 – good start 3 – quality practice 4 – a step forward

Freedom of expression of national and cultural identity is the foundation of the democratic process in society. It is important to point out that one of the main factors of multicultural educational practices is the teacher himself/herself because “if we have competent teachers, who have undergone specific training, we can expect a higher level of respect for cultural specificity in students, for their different needs and so on” (Mićanović, 2009, p. 35). Teachers, through their behaviour and taking into account cultural specificities of all children, develop their multicultural awareness, respect for diversity and democratic values.

In the category of monitoring respect for diversity and democratic values in the protocol, two indicators were identified (Table 4) although the principle of democratization is compatible with other fundamental assumptions of contemporary educational system, and thus present in all other indicators in the protocol. During the observation, it was found that, when it comes to the respect for democratic values and differences in upbringing and educational practice at an early age, the teachers in most cases had attained the level of *quality practice* (48.7%), followed by a *good start* (33.0%), *a step forward* (13.1%) and *inadequate* (5.2%).

Specifically, the researchers who observed the activities in the educational practice of the selected institutions, estimate that teachers predominantly, at the level of quality practices, respect children, their needs, capabilities, choices, not singling out individual participants on any basis. In the educational groups we found the materials collected from different families, shared photos, small projects which involved the children, teachers, parents, community members. Topics focused on family, nuclear and extended, childhood, games and toys, then and now, allow an understanding of values and cultural specificities and heritage of the local community. We note that our research team evaluators, after the observations of work in the educational groups indicate the two options in the affirmative four-level scale. As for the second indicator, which refers to a competent and dedicated behaviour towards developing positive relationships between children, good reciprocity, empathy and mutual respect, it is evident, according to the results obtained, that option no. 3 or *quality practice* dominated. Educators organize role-play games, various group and cooperative activities, supporting children in developing the skills of negotiation, harmonization of different perceptions, cooperation, and not competition. Through the appropriately organized activities in the working space, i.e. in learning centres, with the use of different materials and varying learning procedures in the work, teachers help children achieve better reciprocity, mutual understanding, more tolerant reaction to different opinions and needs, and to more successfully, more maturely overcome conflicts.

The prerequisite for successful teaching is that the child is continuously encouraged to be involved in the activity, make use of cognitive processes, think and cope with problem situations. Therefore, focus and willingness to develop attention in children is a very important prerequisite for a patient and persistent combination, research, and problem-solving (Ognjenović, 2002). There is no specific scheme or formula by which one should follow to develop functional thinking, but there is a clear goal in presenting the story with a problem which leads to the thought, provoking situations in the group and the product of which are original and diverse ideas (Rothschild & Daniels, 2002).

During the observation of practical activities in the educational work at different age levels, 19 indicators were used in the category - *teaching strategies* (Table 5). The broad range of indicators of teaching strategies stems from the need to objectively perceive the teacher's activity in the group, the application of different approaches to teaching/learning, in which a child has a central position. Since teachers develop their own skills to facilitate the way children learn, they are often repeated in similar situations and should be encouraged (Wragg, 1993).

As for the total score regarding the obtained data and assessment of presence of various teaching strategies, it can be concluded that the upbringing and educational practice were dominated by the following: *quality practice* (46.3%), *good start* (34.9%), *inadequate* (11.0%) and *a step forward* (7.8%). The results showed that the teaching staff understood and used modern teaching strategies to a significant extent, but, as with the previous indicator, we cannot abstract an unequivocally striking indication (34.9%), proving that a large number of these strategies is just at the beginning of application, or just on the way to *quality practice*, and even 10% represent *inadequate* examples.

Table 5

Presence of the indicators of teaching strategies in the educational work

Indicators of teaching strategies	1	2	3	4	Total
The teacher uses a wide range of active learning strategies which cover all areas of child development.	5 5.1%	35 36.1%	51 52.6%	6 6.2%	97 100%
The teacher offers activities that encourage exploration, experimentation, self-discovery and creativity.	4 4.0%	45 45.5%	43 43.4%	7 7.1%	99 100%
The teacher uses strategies that encourage higher-order thinking and problem-solving.	10 10.1%	40 40.4%	43 43.4%	6 6.1%	99 100%
The teacher recognizes, appreciates and creates diverse opportunities for informal learning (outside their school, in a wider community...).	5 5.2%	39 40.6%	49 51.1%	3 3.1%	96 100%
The teacher presents the goals of teaching to children and encourages them to think about the process and results of their own learning.	10 10.2%	49 50.0%	35 35.7%	4 4.1%	98 100%
The teacher encourages children to use available developmentally appropriate technologies to support their learning and to develop skills necessary for their active participation in the information society.	52 52.5%	24 24.3%	20 20.2%	3 3.0%	99 100%
The teacher offers activities that nurture a sense of identity and characteristics in children.	13 13.5%	45 46.9%	34 35.4%	4 4.2%	96 100%
The teacher uses strategies to encourage children's independence and initiative.	7 7.1%	34 34.3%	46 46.5%	12 12.1%	99 100%
The teacher uses strategies that encourage children to self-regulate their behaviour.	8 8.1%	44 44.4%	40 40.4%	7 7.1%	99 100%
The teacher uses strategies that help children build positive relationships and cooperation with others.	8 8.1%	29 29.3%	50 50.5%	12 12.1%	99 100%
The teacher develops conflict resolution skills in children.	11 11.5%	33 34.4%	45 46.9%	7 7.3%	96 100%
The teacher connects the learning of new concepts and skills with children's prior knowledge and experience.	4 4.1%	29 29.3%	53 53.5%	13 13.1%	99 100%
The teacher provides adequate support to children in accordance with their needs and progress.	5 5.1%	26 26.3%	56 56.6%	12 12.0%	99 100%
The teacher encourages children to set goals and expectations for their work and to reflect on the results of learning.	12 12.2%	29 29.6%	52 53.1%	5 5.1%	98 100%
The teacher integrates various contents, so that children can see the connection between educational contents and everyday experiences, and how they could be applied in real situations.	10 10.2%	24 24.5%	57 58.2%	7 7.1%	98 100%
The teacher implements procedures which encourage children to meaningfully co-operate and mutually support each other.	12 12.1%	25 25.3%	52 52.5%	10 10.1%	99 100%
The teacher uses strategies that encourage children to participate and understand the consequences.	11 11.1%	35 35.3%	46 46.5%	7 7.1%	99 100%
The teacher uses strategies that help children learn rules, borders, and respect the rights of others.	10 10.1%	35 35.4%	43 43.4%	11 11.1%	99 100%
The teacher offers choices, both during the learning process and in other situations, and helps them develop an understanding of the consequences of their choices.	8 8.2%	32 32.6%	48 49.0%	10 10.2%	98 100%
Summary results for the representation of all the indicators of teaching strategies	205 11.0%	652 34.9%	863 46.3%	146 7.8%	1866 100%

1 – inadequate 2 – good start 3 – quality practice 4 – a step forward

The reasons for such findings and indicators may be found in the already mentioned challenges in practice, such as supernumerary groups, inadequate physical conditions and resources for work, but also in missing the modern professional competences of teachers for functional, comprehensive implementation of complex teaching strategies.

Table 6

Indicators of learning environments in the upbringing and educational practice

Indicators of learning environments	1	2	3	4	Total
The teacher creates an environment that ensures every child to feel comfortable and have a sense of belonging.	5 5.1%	29 29.3%	44 44.4%	21 21.2%	99 100%
The teacher creates an environment where children can freely express themselves through the centres of interest.	5 5.1%	27 27.6%	40 40.8%	26 26.5%	98 100%
The teacher provides space that children find comfortable, thus motivating them to participate in various activities.	4 4.1%	29 29.6%	42 42.8%	23 23.5%	98 100%
The teacher offers a rich and varied selection of available and developmentally appropriate materials which motivate children to explore, play and learn.	5 5.1%	30 30.3%	41 41.4%	23 23.2%	99 100%
The teacher motivates children to participate in planning, designing and maintaining a learning environment.	12 12.9%	25 26.9%	41 44.1%	15 16.1%	93 100%
Summary results for the representation of all the indicators of learning environment.	31 6.4%	140 28.7%	208 42.7%	108 22.2%	487 100%

1 – inadequate 2 – good start 3 – quality practice 4 – a step forward

Through the observation of the upbringing and educational practices in our focus preschool institutions, we tried to document the constituent aspects of the indicator called learning environment. The results (see Table 6) showed that the learning environment, in a sample of 99 educational groups, mostly fell in the category of *quality practices* (42.7%), followed by the categories of *good start* (28.7%), a *step forward* (22.2%) and *inadequate* (6.4%). It is interesting that each indicator has the same order of representation in the categories as presented in the summary view. It is important to emphasize that, for each indicator, a significantly larger number of registered units was recorded in the category *a step forward* than in the category *inadequate*. Finally, when it comes to the learning environment, as an extremely important prerequisite and picture of the general situation, and even for the implicit pedagogy of teachers, we can say that the modern concept of preschool education in Montenegro, introduced during the reform, has been adopted and anchored in the current educational reality.

Teachers, during their monitoring of children in the group/kindergarten, get valuable insights into children's abilities. Based on this, they plan themes, strategies of teaching/learning, set individual and group, short-term and long-term goals, starting from the programme as a referential framework.

Table 7

Indicators of planning educational activities

Indicators of planning	1	2	3	4	Total
The teacher uses systematic observation and other diverse and developmentally appropriate formative assessment tools that reflect on the process and outcomes of learning and development.	7 7.1%	29 29.3%	52 52.5%	11 11.1%	99 100%
The teacher ensures that the evaluation process is based on the strengths of the child and the individual needs and interests.	8 8.1%	24 24.2%	56 56.6%	11 11.1%	99 100%
The teacher plans activities that are based on the developmental levels and interests of children to enable them to acquire the necessary competences for exploration and lifelong learning.	8 8.1%	28 28.3%	55 55.5%	8 8.1%	99 100%
The teacher creates a balance between planned activities and activities that are initiated and chosen, along with finding ways to support individual learning styles and pace.	8 8.2%	32 32.6%	53 54.1%	5 5.1%	98 100%
The teacher, in planning activities, seeks a balance between self-directed learning, learning in small groups and learning in large groups.	8 8.2%	37 37.7%	47 48.0%	6 6.1%	98 100%
The teacher plans sufficiently diverse activities to provide children with new challenges in order to maintain their involvement.	6 6.1%	28 28.3%	57 57.5%	8 8.1%	99 100%
The teacher plans and carries out activities that are flexible enough to take into account the changing circumstances, needs and interests of children.	8 8.1%	24 24.2%	58 58.6%	9 9.1%	99 100%
The teacher helps children become skilled at self-assessment and decision-making about their own learning and behaviour based on clear and consistent criteria.	14 14.4%	31 32.0%	48 49.5%	4 4.1%	97 100%
The teacher advises children on how to evaluate the behaviour and performance of others.	14 14.2%	39 39.4%	43 43.4%	3 3.0%	99 100%
The teacher exchanges information with family members on children's progress and interests, together with short-term and long-term goals for their children.	8 8.1%	50 50.5%	37 37.4%	4 4.0%	99 100%
The teacher involves relevant experts in the assessment and planning whenever necessary.	7 7.3%	45 46.9%	40 41.7%	4 4.1%	96 100%
Summary results for the representation of all the indicators of planning	96 8.9%	367 33.9%	546 50.5%	73 6.7%	1082 100%

1 – inadequate 2 – good start 3 – quality practice 4 – a step forward

Methods and aspects of planning, as a crucial “step”, which are starting and end points for the effective and efficient implementation of educational work in the kindergarten, were analyzed through the observation of these activities and a review of available documentation for a group lesson. During the observations, the level of representation of 11 planning indicators was looked at. As it can be seen in Table 7, most of the indicators (9 of 11) were in the category of *quality practice*, while only two cases (the parents’

participation in the planning of short-term and long-term goals for their children, as well as the inclusion of relevant experts in the process of assessment and planning) were in the category of *good start*. Thus, the overall prevalence of the indicators of planning had the following distribution: *quality practice*, *good start*, *inadequate*, *step forward*. Thus, the largest cumulative number of indicators on the research units (educational groups) was in the category of *quality practice* (546 or 50.5%), followed by the categories of *good start* (367 or 33.9%), *inadequate* (96 or 8.9%), and *a step forward* (73 or 6.7%). The resulting research image about the methods and effects of planning in the context of Montenegrin preschool education shows that the educators functionally combined the programme objectives with the contextual requirements, demands of children and adults, and they individualized activities, taking into account the balance between different work types and difficulty levels. Therefore, the option *quality practice* dominated in our findings. Based on the analysis of educational practices in the focused Montenegrin kindergartens, it can be said that the educators effectively apply developmentally-oriented curriculum, considering the children's interests, needs, choices and active learning as "a process that is becoming holistic" (Slunjski, 2011, p. 23). Immediately after the observations, interviews were held with the teachers whose activities were observed. The interview also contained open-ended questions, and the answers were illustrated with practices and relevant experiences. It was found that the educators divided opinions regarding the effects of reform and the change that the reform had brought to the system.

When it comes to the benefits of reform interventions in preschool practice, the teachers emphasized that it had led to a partial decentralization of the entire organization of educational activities - the institution is now open towards the community; the upbringing and educational process is predominantly focused on the child, giving the greater autonomy to teachers, which resulted in the higher level of responsibility and creativity in the work of professionals; it improved an approach to differences and peculiarities in terms of respecting the needs, desires, capabilities and choices of children in accordance with their individual abilities; it innovated syllabi of the study programmes for preschool education; and social inclusion is now more functionally affirmed.

In most cases, the respondents highlighted a large number of children in the group as the dominant issue in the upbringing and educational process, then they mentioned the lack of quality manuals for programme activities, lack of supplies, lack of support of specialists in educational groups for children with special needs, and lack of commitment of the central system institutions in the field of providing professional development (seminars) for all educators. Also, they pointed out that the openness of the institution towards external agents was insufficient, and that it was carried out superficially and sporadically, and that it did not use enough resources from the local and wider social community. And, as Senge (2007) pointed out: "If you are open, environment will tell you what you need to learn" (Slunjski, 2011, p. 140). The teachers believed that they had experience, but they needed an ongoing training and familiarization with the novelties that occurred in developed educational systems, and that it was necessary to create

better conditions for work in the kindergarten, especially when it comes to following the norms on the number of children in the group to improve the quality of work. The educators were generally satisfied with the training programmes offered by the Bureau of Education, but they were not satisfied with the pace and manner in which they were organized. In their opinion, the Bureau should organize at least 3-4 seminars throughout the year for all educators at the institutions where they work, especially in the northern and southern regions, because it would be a significant contribution to the quality of professional development of teachers in all kindergartens, regardless of the city or region in which they work.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The quality of the organization of educational process depends on several factors: systemic assumptions, expert and professional maturity and competences of the staff, conditions and resources for the implementation of the programme goals. The results showed that the number of children in groups differed and substantially exceeded the projected educational standards (approximately 50% of all groups had over 24 children in the group, with 28.2% of them even more than 30 children per group) with a note that this number was related to the number of children present at the time of observation. Our insight into the admission list showed that the real number of enrolled children in all groups was significantly larger. The aforementioned problem with the size of educational groups certainly affects the quality and scope of the organization and implementation of educational activities. Upon the analysis of the findings, we can conclude that the category of *quality practice* dominates, followed by the category of *good start*, while the categories “inadequate” and “a step forward” are pretty much balanced when it comes to interaction, respect for diversity and democratic values, application of teaching strategies, creation of a learning environment or planning educational work.

Finally, on the basis of the obtained data, we can conclude that the educational practice in preschool institutions in Montenegro has been a part of significant changes in the direction of establishing a complex, multi-directional communication and interaction between all participants in the institution, and that the role of educators is reflected in the indirect support to the learning and development of children. Therefore, educators, as well as autonomous professionals and researchers/creators of their own practices are expected to act in accordance with the contextual needs and to individualize their own educational processes, basing them on an understanding of the child and their learning process. It turned out that the change of “personal paradigm” in practitioners could have the greatest impact on practice itself; practitioners explore, learn about, and better understand the basis of changing and improving. In this sense, we mean the need to develop intersubjectivity, which determines the prospects of mutual learning and understanding of knowledge between children and adults (Slunjski, 2011, p. 106)

Taking into account the results of the observations presented in the study and identified problems/challenges, about which we learned from the interview, we propose

the following measures that would contribute to improving the quality of work in educational process in preschool institutions at all age levels:

- to harmonize the number of children in educational groups by their age level with pedagogical standards and to respect them in practice;
- to provide the continuous professional development for all educators, regardless of the region or city in which they work;
- to create manuals for the reformed programme by fields of activity compliant with the current requirements of developed educational system;
- to provide the continuous support of professionals and assistants working with children with special needs;
- to equip workspace with new didactic materials and modern technologies;
- to systematically improve the position of this segment on the overall level of education and the social context in Montenegro;
- to improve and functionalize documentation that accompanies the educational process, because it can deepen insights into the child's individual needs, and then to design more appropriate and effective educational strategies to work with children;
- to plan according to the programme and living context, to determine objectives from the perspective of the child, to make key topics and themes more operational and closer to the context and the child; to expand the programme offer for children;
- to stimulate the research into practices, openness of institutions "inside and outside", as well as the involvement of all stakeholders, more intensely, methodically and functionally, since the kindergarten is a "living system" (Fullan, 2000, p. 106);
- to facilitate a collaboration among educators in order to improve the overall quality of life in preschools;
- to recognize the autonomy of kindergarten, which seeks self-regeneration and continuous transformation;
- to re-articulate personal views of educators, so that changes in practice would not be merely superficial (Slunjski, 2011, p. 139);
- to enhance a cooperation of preschool institutions with the outside environment, i.e. to open curriculum for ideas of all participants who do (in)directly participate in the life of kindergarten and contribute to the democratization of the educational process with their ideas. This is the only way of transforming the kindergarten into a shared place of active learning and living of good quality.

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Dimenzije predškolskog odgojnog ozračja u Crnoj Gori

Sažetak

U okviru realizacije projekta „Efekti reformskih promjena predškolskog odgojnog konteksta u Crnoj Gori” provedena je i opservacija odgojno-obrazovnog procesa u predškolskim ustanovama, u trima regijama, na ukupnom uzorku od 99 odgojnih skupina.

U radu su prikazani pozitivni učinci koji su rezultat reformskog procesa u predškolstvu u Crnoj Gori, ali i identificirani problemi/izazovi u procesu realizacije programskih ciljeva i aktivnosti.

U cilju što objektivnijeg sagledavanja praktičnih aktivnosti u skupinama različite dobi, koristila se Skala za promatranje odgojnog procesa u vrtiću, s pomoću koje smo precizirali indikatore za fokusirane kompleksne kategorije (interakcije, različitosti i demokratske vrijednosti, strategije poučavanja, okruženja za učenje, planiranje). S ciljem prikupljanja što više relevantnih informacija o postojećem stanju u vrtiću, na osnovi primijenjenog intervjua, zabilježena su i mišljenja i prijedlozi odgojitelja o mogućim putovima unapređivanja metodičke prakse u predškolskim ustanovama u Crnoj Gori.

*Rezultati promatranja i intervjuiranja odgojitelja pokazuju kako je većina procijenjenih indikatora na razini **kvalitetne prakse** (od 1 = neadekvatno do 4 = korak dalje), a predložene su mjere koje bi doprinijele unapređenju kvalitete rada u vrtiću.*

Potrebno je: uskladiti brojnost djece u odgojnim skupinama s pedagoškim standardima, osigurati kontinuiranu obuku stručnog kadra, unaprijediti timsko djelovanje odgajatelja s ciljem sveobuhvatnog unapređivanja kvalitete života u predškolskoj ustanovi.

Ključne riječi: *dobna skupina; kvaliteta rada; odgojitelj; odgojno-obrazovni proces; predškolska ustanova.*

Uvod

Rano djetinjstvo, razdoblje od rođenja do polaska u školu, sve više zaokuplja pažnju istraživača koji se bave pitanjima razvoja i ukupnih mogućnosti djece predškolske dobi. Psiholozi, pedagozi i, općenito znanstvenici i stručnjaci, usredotočeni na kapacitete ranog

djetinjstva, kao pretpostavke cjelovitog napretka ličnosti, u posljednjim desetljećima prošlog i početkom ovog stoljeća, ukazuju na to da, ako se ranije počne raditi na uspostavljanju veza među neuronima, onda će se osigurati potpunija aktualizacija djetetovih urođenih mogućnosti (Rajević, 2009). Ti potencijali ne djeluju i ne razvijaju se sami od sebe. Potrebna je pažnja, odgovarajuća podrška i potpora svakom djetetu pojedinačno, kako u obitelji, tako i na širem društvenom planu. Zato je prirodno promatrati dijete u cjelini i u interakciji s drugima i s okolinom (Vonta, 2009).

Biserka Petrović-Sočo navodi u okviru istraživanja (2007) *Kontekst ustanove za rani odgoj i obrazovanje – holistički pristup* da je kontekst ustanove za rani odgoj i obrazovanje kao "živi organizam" (Stul i Fink, 2000, str. 36 u Petrović-Sočo, 2007) koji djeluje kao interaktivna mreža socijalnih, kulturalnih, ekoloških i vremenskih odnosa s kojima je dijete u stalnom međudjelovanju.

Danas više nema dileme da dijete polazi u školu s oblikovanim predodžbama brojnih pojmova i da ne kreće od početka ili »od nule« i da ranije, predškolske faze u odrastanju, nisu samo pripremne ili beznačajne za daljnji razvoj (Mićanović, 2003). Stoga se značaj ranog razvoja sve ozbiljnije shvaća i prevladava „mišljenje da je maloj djeci potrebna posebna pažnja zbog toga što se fundamentalno razlikuju od odraslih. Razumijevanje razvoja čovjeka i funkcioniranja mozga istodobno poboljšava kvalitetu programa i odgojne prakse za djecu“ (Walsh, 2001, str. 16). Dugo njegovani tradicionalni pristup predškolskim institucijama za djecu, kao čuvalištima ili malim školama ustupa mjesto fleksibilnijoj koncepciji vrtića kao „otvorenog sustava“ usmjerenog na dijete. Dijete se promatra s holističkog gledišta, kao cjelovito, osobito jedinstvo sposobnosti, interesa, potreba, obiteljskih pretpostavki, a njegova puna projekcija i aktualizacija potencijala moguća je samo uz odgovarajuću podršku vršnjaka i odraslih, i njihovo povezivanje (Tankersley, Brajković, & Handžar, 2011). Jedino u odnosu različitih prirodnih okruženja dijete ima priliku ostvariti svoje potrebe i interese, upoznati sebe, druge i širu okolinu. Zato je holistički pristup usmjeren na dijete kao sustav, jedinstvo razvojnih aspekata u interakciji s okolinom, tj. kako L. Malaguzzi ističe, kritizirajući bihevioralno orijentirane obrazovne modele: „*Stotina postoji. Dijete je stvoreno od stotine. Dijete ima sto jezika, sto ruku, misli, načina mišljenja, sto načina igranja, za govorenje, slušanje, za čuđenje, voljenje, za pjevanje, razumijevanje, stotinu svjetova za otkrivanje i stotinu za snove.*

....*Dijete ima stotinu jezika (i opet stotinu i stotinu) ali krađu mu ih devedeset i devet. Škola i kultura, odvajaju mu glavu od tijela! Govore mu da misli bez ruku, da čini bez glave, da sluša i ne govori, da shvaća bez veselja, da voli i da se divi.*“ (Miljak, 2009, str. 11).

U tim metaforičnim navodima L. Malaguzzi nalazimo ključne razloge za pomicanje težišta odgojnih intervencija s fragmentarnih sadržaja na integrirane aktivnosti, s nastavnika na dijete, s vrtića kao zatvorene institucije prema dječjoj ustanovi otvorenog tipa, koja postaje integralni dio širega društvenog konteksta. Za tako krupne promjene i bitno preusmjeravanje odgojno-obrazovne prakse u predškolskim ustanovama potrebno je postupno usvajati novu paradigmu učenja i razumijevanja, a nositelji promjena ne moraju i ne mogu biti samo ljudi izvana „nego i oni koji kreiraju svakodnevnu praksu i u nju su uključeni“ (Šagud, 2006, str. 37).

Promjene u crnogorskom predškolskom kontekstu

Od 2000. godine službeno su postavljene osnovne konceptijske pretpostavke odgojno-obrazovnog sustava u Crnoj Gori, od predškolskog do srednjoškolskog obrazovanja. Novine u sustavu predškolskog odgoja odnosile su se, ponajprije, na uspostavljanje fleksibilnije i otvorenije prostorno-vremenske organizacije rada, partnerstvo s obitelji i društvenom zajednicom u uvjetima aktivnijeg participiranja i razmjene između svih sudionika u cilju deinstitucionalizacije i približavanja životnom kontekstu. Predreformski model predškolskog odgoja u Crnoj Gori bio je prilično zatvoren, detaljno didaktički propisan, preskriptivno oblikovan i unificiran, tako da odgojitelji nisu imali autonomiju i profesionalnu slobodu da kurikulum operacionaliziraju shodno kontekstu u kojem rade. Umjesto zatvorenog sadržajno koncipiranog kurikula usvojene su: **Osnove programa** kao referentni kurikularni okvir za razvijanje programskih ciljeva po razvojnim područjima (*Program za područja aktivnosti u predškolskom vaspitanju i obrazovanju, 2004, 2007, MPCG i Zavod za školstvo Crne Gore*). Odgojitelji su dobili priliku da, oslanjajući se na vlastite profesionalne procjene, uvide i spoznaja o svom radnom kontekstu prilagođavaju i »savijaju« obavezujući, otvoreni ciljno-procesno strukturirani kurikulum. Stimuliranje specijaliziranih programa jedan je od načina da se omogući diversifikacija ponuda djeci i roditeljima te poštuju želje i potrebe svih zainteresiranih. U Crnoj Gori predškolski odgoj i obrazovanje, kao integralni dio jedinstvenog obrazovnog sustava, u kontekstu reformskih promjena, postupno postaje društveno vidljiviji i dobiva, istina sporo, sve više na važnosti. Iako postotak obuhvata predškolske djece institucionalnim društvenim formama odgoja i obrazovanja nije zadovoljavajuć, odnosno i dalje je ispod očekivanih i važećih europskih standarda (svega 30%), više je nego očito da su se dogodile kvalitativno značajne promjene u posljednjim desetljećima prošlog i početkom ovog stoljeća u navedenoj djelatnosti (Villegas, & Reimers, 2000). Stopa obuhvata djece rane dobi u predškolskim institucijama povećana je za desetak posto (s 20% na 30%), uvedeni su kraći i specijalizirani programi u javnim predškolskim ustanovama, licencirani su prvi privatni vrtići, otvorena je i predškolska ustanova koja afirmira međunarodno priznati Montessori program. Jedna od ključnih promjena koja je nastala kao rezultat suvremene paradigme učenja, pretpostavljene reformiranom obrazovnom sustavu, jest otvorenost predškolskih ustanova "izvana i iznutra". Sve je to imalo pozitivne posljedice na povećano obuhvaćanje djece rane dobi institucionalnim odgojno-obrazovnim procesom. S druge strane, edukaciji nastavnog kadra u crnogorskom se kontekstu poklanja intenzivnija pažnja posredstvom raznih formi profesionalnog razvoja i stručnog usavršavanja, u okviru Zavoda za školstvo, Ministarstva prosvjete, ali i samih predškolskih institucija, s „ciljem proširivanja stručnih, metodičkih, teorijskih i praktičnih” znanja i kompetencija naših odgojitelja (Mićanović, 2012, str. 51). Također, na razini inicijalnog obrazovanja budućih odgojitelja dogodile su se funkcionalne promjene u smislu proširivanja kurikula i njegova usklađivanja sa suvremenim tendencijama u predškolskim odgojno-obrazovnim sustavima. Istina, profesionalna uvjerenja odgajatelja, tj. njihove „implicitne i/ili folk pedagogije“, njihove osobne teorije učenja, mijenjaju se sporije, postupno, na svoj način.

Budući da je aktualni predškolski kontekst u Crnoj Gori izmijenjen i usklađen sa suvremenim znanstvenim tendencijama u tom području (Strategija ranog i predškolskog vaspitanja i obrazovanja u Crnoj Gori, 2010-2015) i kao takav kompatibilan s ostalim segmentima u obrazovnoj vertikali, pokušali smo opsežnije sagledati dimenzije reformiranog ambijenta u okviru istraživanja, koje smo proveli na uzorku od 99 odgojnih skupina u različitim gradovima, u svim trima regijama Crne Gore. Istraživanje smo proveli u okviru projekta »Efekti reformskih promjena predškolskog odgojno-obrazovnog konteksta u Crnoj Gori« 2012. i 2013. godine.

Metode

Predmet i cilj istraživanja

U okviru navedenog istraživačkog projekta, usredotočenog na evaluaciju reformskih promjena u području predškolskog odgoja i obrazovanja u Crnoj Gori, značajan dio cjelovitog istraživačkog predmeta odnosio se na opažanje odgojno-obrazovnog procesa u različitim dobnim skupinama u vrtiću. *Glavna istraživačka hipoteza glasi: Pretpostavlja se da odgojno-obrazovni proces u predškolskim ustanovama u Crnoj Gori u značajnoj mjeri odgovara na ključne reformske zahtjeve/zadatke u domeni: učenja, načina implementacije kurikula i stručno-profesionalne pripremljenosti odgojitelja za ostvarenje reformskih ciljeva.*

U okviru navedene glavne hipoteze posebnu smo pažnju usmjerili na specifični cilj/podhipotezu: Pretpostavlja se da u području neposredne odgojno-obrazovne prakse postoje kvalitativno značajni pomaci, u poddomeni interaktivnih oblika učenja, procesa individualizacije i demokratizacije odgojnog rada, okoline za učenje, ali i da predstoje ozbiljniji napor na putu izgradnje pogodnijeg predškolskog ambijenta usmjerenog na dijete u svim uzrastima.

U skladu s istraživačkim hipotezama definirali smo područja opažanja:

a) Osposobljenost odgojitelja za ostvarivanje kvalitetne interakcije s djecom rane dobi, razumijevanje i prihvaćanje različitosti, kao polazišta u odgojno-obrazovnom djelovanju, uz primjenu suvremenih strategija podučavanja i kreiranja adekvatnog okruženja za učenje

b) Djelatni pravci i putevi odgojno-obrazovnog rada odgojitelja i načini provedbe temeljnih reformskih ideja u praksi, uz primjenu suvremenih strategija poučavanja i kreiranje okruženja za učenje, koje pogoduje različitim sudionicima u kontekstu predškolske ustanove.

Uz ostala empirijska polja u istraživanju smo se opredijelili za opservaciju aktivnosti u različitim dobnim odgojnim skupinama, kako bismo dobili što objektivniju predodžbu o realnom stanju u pogledu izdvojenog problema. S intencijom sakupljanja što više relevantnih informacija o postojećem stanju u vrtićima, u domeni neposredne realizacije odgojno-obrazovnog rada u Crnoj Gori, prikupili smo i mišljenja i prijedloge odgojitelja o mogućim putevima unapređivanja metodičke prakse u predškolskim ustanovama.

Uzorak

Uzorkom istraživanja obuhvaćeno je 9 vrtića s ukupno 99 odgojnih skupina, od jasličke do starije predškolske skupine, u svim trima crnogorskim regijama (29 iz južne, 59 iz središnje i 11 iz sjeverne regije). Riječ je o namjernom i prigodnom uzorku jer je istraživanje provedeno u institucijama (vrtićima) koje su nam bile dostupne iz svih triju regija i s odgojiteljima (ukupno 99) koji su bili voljni dopustiti opažanje i sudjelovati u istraživanju s ravnateljima i pedagozima vrtića.

Za analizu proučavanog problema nastojalo se da uzorkom opažanja bude obuhvaćen što veći broj institucija predškolskog odgoja u sve tri regije u Crnoj Gori. Zato se iz svake regije uzelo po tri grada (Sjeverna regija: Berane, Bijelo Polje i Pljevlja; Središnja regija: Nikšić, Podgorica i Cetinje; Južna regija: Bar, Budva, Herceg Novi).

Uzorak istraživanja čini ukupno 99 jedinica od kojih je najveći broj odgojnih aktivnosti promatran u središnjoj regiji – 59 odgojnih skupina (Podgorica, Nikšić i Cetinje), zatim južnoj regiji – 29 odgojnih skupina (Bar, Budva i Herceg Novi) i najmanje u sjevernoj regiji – 11 odgojnih skupina (Pljevlja, Bijelo Polje i Berane). Razlog zbog kojeg je izvršena navedena disperzija uzorkovanih skupina jest u činjenici da je uzorak djece obuhvaćen organiziranim predškolskim odgojem i obrazovanjem dominantan u središnjoj regiji, zatim u južnoj i najmanji u sjevernoj regiji, a nije bio cilj napraviti usporedbu među regijama, već utvrditi dominantnu sliku organizacije odgojno-obrazovnog rada s predškolskom djecom u crnogorskom obrazovnom sustavu (Slika 1).

Slika 1.

Instrument

U istraživanju su korišteni *protokol za promatranje* (Tankersley, Brajković & Handžar, 2011, *ISSA-ina definicija kvalitetne pedagoške prakse – Koraci prema kvalitetnoj praksi*) i *kratak obrazac za intervju*. Protokol nam je pomogao u prikupljanju općih podataka koji se odnose na instituciju, odgojnu skupinu, broj djece u skupini, i odraslih osoba koje sudjeluju u odgojno-obrazovnom procesu. Osim općih podataka protokol je sadržavao i indikatore za *procjenu/ocjenu, različitosti i demokratske vrijednosti, okolinu za učenje i planiranje*. Obrazac za intervju odgojitelja koji su sudjelovali u opservaciji odnosio se na reformske promjene u organizaciji i pristupu realizaciji odgojno-obrazovnog rada, pružanje podrške u radu, otvorenost vrtića i spremnost odgojitelja za promjenu i kreiranje rada u kojem djeca biraju aktivnosti (razvojno orijentirani kurikulum).

Protokol za promatranje u dijelu koji se odnosio na primjenjivost samih indikatora imao je za svaku opciju četiri mogućnosti procjene (1 – neadekvatno, 2 – dobar početak, 3 – kvalitetna praksa, 4 – korak dalje).

Postupak istraživanja i prikazivanje rezultata

U postupku ovog istraživanja bili su uključeni autori rada. Promatranja aktivnosti (30 – 45 minuta) odgojitelja u radu s djecom provodila su istodobno dva istraživača koji su neovisno jedan o drugom pratili i identificirali pokazatelje u protokolu za promatranje,

zatim su nakon provedenog promatranja analizirali dojmove o aktivnosti i utvrđivali zastupljenost pojedinih indikatora. Nakon opažanja odgojno-obrazovnih aktivnosti, provedeni su intervjui s odgojiteljima u čijim se skupinama boravilo. Intervjui su u prosjeku trajali od 15 do 30 minuta, a provedeni su po isteku radnog vremena u vrtiću. Podaci su prikupljeni tijekom 2012. i 2013. godine.

U radu su dane frekvencije i postoci, kao statistički pokazatelji varijabli, na osnovi kojih možemo jasno uočiti modele dobre prakse, ali i probleme koji otežavaju ili dovode u pitanje kvalitetno provođenje odgojno-obrazovnog rada u predškolskim ustanovama. Kvantitativne pokazatelje upotpunili smo deskriptivnom analizom proučavanog problema i odgovorima ispitanika (odgojitelji čije smo aktivnosti promatrali), čime smo objektivizirali sliku stanja proučavanog fenomena u predškolskoj praksi.

Rezultati i rasprava

Da bismo utvrdili jednu od važnih varijabli održivosti kvalitete organizacije i realizacije odgojno-obrazovnog rada u ranoj dobi, utvrdili smo brojnost odgojnih skupina na danom uzorku (tablica 1.). Ovdje je značajno napomenuti da su istraživači upisivali broj djece koja su u trenutku promatranja bila u vrtićkoj skupini, a od odgojitelja smo dobili odgovor da u svim skupinama ima znatno više upisane djece nego što ih je tog dana bilo u skupini i da njihov broj često oscilira ovisno o vremenskim uvjetima i zdravstvenom stanju djece.

Tablica 1.

Budući da su pedagoški normativi o broju djece u skupini propisani Zakonom o predškolskom odgoju (*Zakon o predškolskom vaspitanju i obrazovanju*, »Sl. list RCG« *Službeni list CG*, br. 49/2007) i da se, u zavisnosti od uzrasta djece, broj upisane djece u odgojnoj skupini kreće u sljedećim granicama: 12 za djecu u skupini do dvije godine starosti, 14 za djecu od dvije do tri godine, 10 za djecu u mješovitoj skupini do tri godine, 20 za djecu od tri do četiri godine, 24 za djecu od četiri do pet godina, 25 za djecu od pet do šest godina i 20 za djecu u mješovitoj skupini, od tri do šest godina. Dati normativi utvrđeni su shodno razvojnim specifičnostima predškolske djece i označeni kao obavezujući u zakonskim propisima. Mi smo, polazeći od toga, promatrali aktualno stanje u crnogorskim predškolskim ustanovama. U odnosu na istaknute normative po dobnim skupinama, naše je istraživanje pokazalo da je kod mlađe skupine od ukupno 24 promatrane skupine, 11 skupina (45,8%) u navedenim granicama, a da je 13 skupina ili 54,2% uzorka mlađe skupine iznad navedene granice, što znači da približno polovina odgojnih skupina mlađe predškolske dobi radi u neadekvatnim uvjetima. Kada je u pitanju srednja odgojna skupina, onda uočavamo da je stanje nešto bolje, jer je u 18 skupina (64,3%) broj djece u predviđenim dopuštenim okvirima, tj. do 24 djece u skupini, a preostalih je 10 odgojnih skupina (35,7%) iznad tog normativa. Kada su u pitanju starija predškolska djeca, uočavamo drugačije stanje, pa imamo svega 11 odgojnih skupina (27,5%) koje su po brojnosti u granicama pedagoškog normativa (do

25 djece u skupini), a 29 starijih skupina (72,5%) je iznad tog normativa. U mješovitim skupinama (od 3 do 6 godina) 2 skupine (50%) su u granicama normativa, a 50% njih je iznad te granice (više od 20 djece u skupini). I jaslički uzrast sve tri skupine (100%) je u kategoriji više od 14 djece u skupini, što premašuje predviđeni pedagoški normativ.

Na općoj razini može se istaći da brojnost djece u odgojnim skupinama u velikom broju slučajeva premašuje normativima dopuštene granice, što značajno otežava rad odgojitelja. Zato možemo istaći da je, s ciljem kvalitetnijeg pristupa radu s djecom predškolske dobi, nužno voditi računa o navedenim pedagoškim normativima, s obzirom na brojnost odgojnih skupina, jer jedino tako možemo funkcionalno afirmirati vodeća načela suvremene obrazovne paradigme učenja.

Tablica 2.

Kao što se može vidjeti u tablici 2, vrijeme opažanja odgojnog procesa u jasličkim i vrtičkim grupama u predškolskim ustanovama u Crnoj Gori bilo je od 30 do 45 minuta, s tim da prevladava prva kategorija – *do 30 minuta*. Tako je opažanje odgojno-obrazovnih aktivnosti u 75 odgojnih skupina (75,8%) trajalo do 30 minuta, a u 24 skupine (24,2%) do 45 minuta.

Tablica 3.

Praksa pokazuje da je djeci rane dobi neophodno posvetiti mnogo više pažnje i važnosti putem aktivnosti koje zahtijevaju postavljanje pitanja, jer je sam odnos prema postavljanju pitanja često povod za razmišljanje o tom problemu (Polonsky, Freedman, Leshner, i Morrison, 2002). Interakcija je neophodna za uspostavljanje dijaloga kojim dijete iskazuje vlastito mišljenje i razvija komunikacijske vještine. Postavljanjem različitih vrsta pitanja odgojitelji i roditelji potiču djecu na preispitivanje, promišljanje na višoj razini (Stel i Temple, 2000, str. 85). To su u ranoj dobi dobri putovi, načini i postupci s pomoću kojih djecu učimo vještini pravilnog uspostavljanja veza i odnosa među komponentama u problemskoj situaciji, to jest kod njih razvijamo sposobnosti funkcionalnog razmišljanja. Pritom su iznimno važna refleksivna i metakognitivna pitanja koja djecu potiču na sagledavanje i procjenu učinkovitosti vlastitih postupaka i odabir odgovarajućih postupaka daljnjeg djelovanja.

Tijekom promatranja imali smo spreman protokol i detaljno smo pratili zastupljenost pojedinih indikatora u svakoj fazi aktivnosti odgojitelja i djece. Bitno je istaknuti da od, ukupno 9 indikatora interakcije koje smo pratili na uzorku od 99 vrtičkih skupina, ni u jednoj skupini nismo identificirali sve indikatore, zato se u stupcu *ukupno* primjećuje da uzorak varira, jer nam u tom slučaju razlika između ukupnog broja opserviranih (99) i prikazanih jedinica pokazuje broj jedinica u kojima nismo identificirali taj indikator (Tablica 3.). Zastupljenost indikatora interakcije u odgojno-obrazovnom procesu na ranom uzrastu (individualna očekivanja od djece, poštovanje različitosti, uvažavanje razvojnih aspekata, postizanje zajedničkog razumijevanja, uvažavanje obiteljske kulture) prema rezultatima naše opservacije i označenim poljima u skali, u najvećem je broju slučajeva na razini *kvalitetne prakse* (49,4%) što je, možemo

zaključiti, kvalitativno značajan iskorak i pozitivan pokazatelj, osobito ako imamo u vidu brojne otežavajuće faktore (prekomjerna brojnost skupine, nedovoljno prostora za različite aktivnosti, nedovoljno didaktičkih materijala i dr.). No, nije zanemariv postotak (33,3%), a ni situacija kada je procijenjena interakcija na razini „dobrog početka“, a u 7,6% slučajeva obilježena je opcija „neadekvatno“. Kad je u pitanju indikator 3, koji se odnosi na kreiranje interakcija koje holistički pogoduju dječjim razvojnim aspektima, onda ocjene istraživača dominantno nalazimo u kategoriji 3, tj. *kvalitetnoj praksi* (51,5%). Primjenjujući aktualni kurikulum u praksi, odgojitelji nastoje funkcionalno povezivati ciljeve i sadržaje preko različitih životno-praktičnih i kompleksnih aktivnosti. Također, radni ambijent strukturiran po centrima zanimanja omogućuje odgajateljima obuhvatniji uvid, praćenje, refleksiju i kreiranje kompleksnije interakcije među djecom i s odraslima. Opcija 3, odn. *kvalitetna praksa* dominira i kod slijedećeg indikatora (4), koji se odnosi na kreiranje prilika za izbor, pa prema opažanju i procjeni istraživača odgojitelji u odabranim predškolskim ustanovama nastoje oblikovati odgovarajuće centre učenja s dovoljno raznovrsnog, prirodnog, polu i nestrukturiranog materijala i didaktike. U odgojnom procesu, u fokusiranim skupinama, dominira opcija *kvalitetne prakse* i u pogledu doživljaja/procjene naših istraživača u domeni afirmiranja pozitivne slike o sebi kod djece i razvijanja dobre uzajamnosti, osjećaja zajedništva i suradničkog odnosa (indikator 5: 58,2%). Također, u nešto manjem postotku, u kategoriji *kvalitetne prakse*, nalazimo i dominantan broj opredjeljenja naših istraživača, vezano i uz indikator 8, koji je usmjeren na razvoj jezika i komunikacijskih vještina kod djece. Odgojitelji nastoje slušati djecu, s njima razgovarati, postavljaju im otvorena pitanja, potiču ih na pravilno izražavanje i promišljanje. Također, varirajući različite oblike rada, potiču djecu na međusobnu razmjenu, dogovaranje, pojašnjavanje različitih ideja i stajališta, kao i pretpostavljanje i predviđanje rješenja u nekim situacijama. Jedino kod posljednjeg indikatora u predstavljenoj ljestvici interakcija nalazimo da u opažanju i procjeni istraživača dominira drugoponuđena opcija, tj. *dobar početak* (42,7%). Dakle, dobiveni rezultati upućuju na zaključak da odgojitelji nedovoljno angažiraju roditelje i članove zajednice pri kreiranju i realiziranju stalnih odgojno-obrazovnih aktivnosti u predškolskim ustanovama, ne prepoznajući važnost otkrivanja posebnih vještina, interesa i znanja članova obitelji, kojima bi mogli pridonijeti ukupnoj kvaliteti odgojnog procesa. Dobiveni pokazatelji ukazuju na potrebu za preispitivanjem prakse, traženjem puteva za unapređivanjem vještina i kompetencija, i naravno profesionalnim motiviranjem odgojitelja i ostalih sudionika u odgojno-obrazovnom ambijentu vrtića. Gutek (2004) smatra da je neophodno dodatno educirati odgajatelje po principima primjene nove filozofije, ideologije i pristupa obrazovanju. Uz potrebnu obuku, koju bi valjalo sustavno, namjenski i kontinuirano osigurati odgojiteljima, bilo bi nužno omogućiti bolje uvjete rada i afirmirati to zanimanje, što će doprinijeti i izmijenjenoj implicitnoj pedagogiji profesionalaca i njihovom posvećenijem stručnom i ukupnom angažmanu.

Istraživanje je pokazalo da vrlo malen broj odgojitelja interakciju u skupini ostvaruje na razini *korak dalje* (u prosjeku manje od 10%, tj. 9,7%), a to su zapravo primjeri dobre

prakse, odnosno poučavanja usmjerenog na dijete. Takvi primjeri predstavljaju iskorak u transformativnu praksu i pokazuju kako nastavnici mogu proširiti poučavanje da bi motivirali i druge za kreativniji angažman i šire, sustavne promjene u odgojnoj sredini (Tankersley, Brajković, i Handžar,2011).

Tablica 4.

Sloboda izražavanja nacionalnog i kulturnog identiteta predstavlja temelj demokratskog procesa u društvu. Bitno je istaknuti da je jedan od glavnih činitelja multikulturalne obrazovne prakse i sam nastavnik, jer „ako imamo kompetentne nastavnike, koji su prošli određene treninge, možemo očekivati veću razinu uvažavanja kulturalnih specifičnosti učenika, njihovih različitih potreba i sl.“ (Mićanović, 2009, str. 35). Odgojitelj svojim ophođenjem, uvažavanjem kulturalnih specifičnosti sve djece, razvija kod njih multikulturalnu svijest, poštivanje različitosti i demokratskih vrijednosti.

U kategoriji praćenja poštivanja različitosti i demokratskih vrijednosti u protokolu smo izdvojili dva indikatora (tablica 4.), iako je to načelo kompatibilno s ostalim temeljnim pretpostavkama suvremenog obrazovnog sustava, a samim tim zastupljeno u svim ostalim indikatorima u protokolu. Promatranjem smo utvrdili da su, kada je u pitanju poštivanje demokratskih vrijednosti i različitosti u odgojno-obrazovnoj praksi na primjeru rane dobi, odgojitelji u najvećem broju slučajeva na razini *kvalitetne prakse* (48,7%), zatim slijedi *dobar početak* (33,0%), *korak dalje* (13,1%) i *neadekvatno* (5,2%).

Naime, istraživači koji su pratili aktivnosti u odgojno-obrazovnoj praksi uzorkom odabranih ustanova procjenjuju da naši odgojitelji dominantno, na razini kvalitetne prakse, uvažavaju djecu, njihove potrebe, mogućnosti, izbore, ne izdvajajući sudionike ni na koji način. U odgojnim skupinama nalazimo materijale prikupljene od različitih obitelji, zajedničke fotografije, male projekte u kojima su sudjelovala djeca, odgajatelji, roditelji, članovi zajednice. Teme koje su fokusirane na obitelj, užu i širu, djetinjstvo, igre i igračke, nekad i sad, omogućuju upoznavanje vrijednosti i kulturoloških specifičnosti i nasljeđa lokalne sredine. Zapažamo da naši procjenjivači iz istraživačkog tima, nakon promatranja rada u odgojnim skupinama, označavaju dvije afirmativne opcije na četverostupanjskoj skali. I kod drugog indikatora, koji se odnosio na kompetentno i posvećeno odgovorno ponašanje odgojitelja u pravcu razvijanja pozitivnog odnosa među djecom, dobre uzajamnosti, empatije i međusobnog uvažavanja, očito je, prema dobivenim rezultatima, da dominira opcija 3 ili *kvalitetna praksa*. Odgajatelji organiziraju igre uloga, različite grupne i kooperativne aktivnosti, podržavajući ih u razvijanju vještina pregovaranja, usuglašavanja različitih percepcija, suradnje, a ne nadmetanja. Putem primjereno organiziranih aktivnosti u radnoj sobi, u centrima učenja, uz primjenu raznovrsnih materijala i (variranje) obrazovnih postupaka u radu, odgajatelji pomažu djeci u ostvarivanju bolje uzajamnosti, međusobnog razumijevanja, da s više tolerancije reagiraju na drugačija mišljenja i potrebe i da uspješnije, zrelije rješavaju sukobe.

Tablica 5.

Pretpostavka za uspješno poučavanje jest da dijete kontinuirano potičemo na aktivnost, korištenje obrazovnih postupaka, promišljanje i snalaženje u problemskim situacijama. Zato je fokusiranje i razvijanje voljne pažnje kod djece vrlo važna pretpostavka za strpljivo i ustrajno kombiniranje, istraživanje i rješavanje problema (Ognjenović, 2002). Ne postoji precizna shema, ni formula po kojoj treba postupiti da bi se razvilo funkcionalno razmišljanje, ali postoji jasan cilj izlaganja priče koja izaziva problemsku situaciju koja dovodi do misaone napetosti u grupi čiji su produkt originalne i raznovrsne ideje (Rothschild, & Daniels, 2002).

U promatranju praktičnih aktivnosti u odgojno-obrazovnom radu na različitim dobnim razinama primijenili smo 19 indikatora u kategoriji – *strategije poučavanja* (tablica 5.). Širok opseg indikatora strategije poučavanja proizlazi iz potrebe da se što objektivnije sagleda odgojiteljska djelatnost u skupini, primjene različiti pristupi poučavanju/učenju, u kojima dijete ima središnju poziciju. Budući da odgojitelji razvijaju vlastita umijeća kojima se služe da bi djeci olakšali učenje, ona se često ponavljaju u sličnim situacijama i treba ih poticati (Wragg, 1993).

U ukupnom zbroju promatranjem dobivenih podataka i procjenom o zastupljenosti različitih strategija poučavanja možemo zaključiti da u odgojno-obrazovnoj praksi dominira *kvalitetna praksa* (46,3%), zatim slijedi *dobar početak* (34,9%), *neadekvatno* (11,0%) i na kraju *korak dalje* (7,8%). Dobiveni rezultati pokazuju da odgojitelji razumiju i koriste se suvremenim strategijama poučavanja, u značajnoj mjeri, ali, kao i kod prethodnog indikatora, ne možemo apstrahirati ni nedvojbeno značajni pokazatelj (34,9%), koji ukazuje na to da se velik broj tih strategija tek počinje primjenjivati, ili su samo *put ka kvalitetnoj praksi*, čak i 10% *neadekvatnih primjera*.

Razloge takvih nalaza i pokazatelja možemo tražiti u već spomenutim izazovima u praksi, kao što su: prekobrojne skupine, neadekvatni prostorni uvjeti i resursi za rad, ali i nedostatne suvremene stručne kompetencije odgajatelja za funkcionalnu, sveobuhvatnu primjenu kompleksnih strategija poučavanja.

Tablica 6.

Promatranjem odgojno-obrazovne prakse u našim istraživački fokusiranim predškolskim ustanovama nastojali smo evidentirati aspekte indikatora, *okruženja za učenje*. Rezultati, prikazani u tablici 6, pokazuju da je okruženje za učenje u najvećem broju slučajeva na uzorku od 99 odgojno-obrazovnih skupina u kategoriji *kvalitetne prakse* (42,7%), zatim slijede kategorije *dobar početak* (28,7%), *korak dalje* (22,2%) i *neadekvatno* (6,4%). Zanimljivo je da svaki indikator ima isti redoslijed zastupljenosti u kategorijama kao što je u zajedničkom prikazu navedeno. Bitno je istaknuti da po svakom indikatoru bilježimo uvjerljivo veći broj registriranih jedinica u kategoriji *korak dalje* nego u kategoriji *neadekvatno*. Na kraju, kada je u pitanju okolina za učenje, kao izimno važna pretpostavka i slika ukupnog stanja, pa i »implicitne pedagogije« odgojitelja, možemo zaključiti da je suvremeni, reformom inaugurirani koncept predškolskog odgoja u Crnoj Gori usvojen, uključen u aktualnu obrazovnu stvarnost.

Tablica 7.

Odgovitelj/ica na osnovi praćenja djece u skupini/vrtiću, stječe kvalitetniji uvid u mogućnosti djece, na temelju čega planira teme, strategije poučavanja/učenja, postavlja individualne i grupne, kratkoročne i dugoročne ciljeve, polazeći od Programa kao referentnog okvira.

Načine i aspekte planiranja, kao ključnog »koraka«, polazišta i ishodišta djelotvorne i kvalitetne realizacije odgojno-obrazovnog rada u vrtiću, nastojali smo putem opservacije sagledati (realizirane) aktivnosti i pregled dostupne pedagoške dokumentacije u skupini. Tijekom opažanja sagledavali smo razinu zastupljenosti 11 indikatora planiranja. Kao što se u tablici 7. može vidjeti, najveći broj indikatora planiranja (9 od ukupno 11) nalazimo u kategoriji *kvalitetna praksa*, a samo je u dva slučaja (sudjelovanje roditelja u planiranju kratkoročnih i dugoročnih ciljeva za njihovo dijete, kao i uključivanje relevantnih stručnjaka u proces praćenja, procjenjivanja i planiranja), označena opcija *dobar početak*. Tako ukupna zastupljenost indikatora planiranja ima sljedeću distribuciju: *kvalitetna praksa*, *dobar početak*, *neadekvatno*, *korak dalje*. Dakle, najveći zajednički broj indikatora po jedinicama istraživanja (odgojno-obrazovnim grupama) nalazi se u kategoriji *kvalitetna praksa* (546 ili 50,5%), zatim slijedi kategorija *dobar početak* (367 ili 33,9%), *neadekvatno* (96 ili 8,9%) i *korak dalje* (73 ili 6,7%). Dobivena istraživačka slika o načinu i efektima planiranja u predškolskom kontekstu u Crnoj Gori pokazuje da odgojitelji/ce funkcionalno kombiniraju kurikularne ciljeve sa zahtjevima konteksta, djece, odraslih, individualiziraju aktivnosti, vodeći računa o usklađenosti između različitih oblika rada i razina zahtjevnosti. Stoga u našim nalazima dominira procjena *kvalitetne prakse*. Na temelju analize odgojne prakse u izfokabranim crnogorskim vrtićima, možemo ustvrditi da odgojitelji djelotvorno primjenjuju razvojno orijentirani kurikulum, uvažavajući dječje interese, potrebe, pravo na izbor i aktivno učenje, kao »proces koji se zbiva holistički« (Slunjski, 2011, str. 23).

Neposredno nakon promatranja proveden je intervju s odgojiteljima/cama čije smo aktivnosti promatrali. Intervju je sadržavao pitanja otvorenog tipa, a odgojitelji/ce su svoje odgovore potkrepljivali primjerima iz prakse. Utvrdili smo da su odgojitelji/ce podijeljenog mišljenja u pogledu reformskih učinaka i promjena koje je reforma donijela.

Kad su u pitanju dobrobiti od reformskih zahvata u predškolskoj praksi, odgojitelji/ce ističu: izvršena je djelomična decentralizacija cjelokupne organizacije odgojno-obrazovnih aktivnosti – otvaranje ustanove prema sredini; odgojno-obrazovni proces je dominantno usmjeren na dijete; dana je veća autonomija odgajateljima, što je utjecalo na višu razinu odgovornosti i kreativnosti u radu profesionalaca; uvažavanje različitosti i posebnosti u smislu uvažavanja potreba, želja i mogućnosti djece i izbor u skladu s individualnim mogućnostima; inovativni silabi u studijskom programu za predškolski odgoj; socijalna je inkluzija funkcionalnije afirmirana.

Ispitanici su u najvećem broju slučajeva kao dominantan problem u odgojno-obrazovnom procesu istaknuli velik broj djece u skupini, zatim nedostatak kvalitetnih

priručnika za programske aktivnosti, nedostatak potrošnog materijala, nedovoljnu podršku stručnjaka u odgojnim grupama s djecom s posebnim potrebama i nedovoljnu posvećenost nadležnih institucija sustava u području osiguranja stručnog usavršavanja (seminara) za sve odgojitelje. Također, ističu da je otvorenost ustanova prema vanjskim agensima nedovoljna, da se provodi površno i pojedinačno, da se ne koriste u dovoljnoj mjeri resursi lokalne i društvene zajednice. A kako je Senge (2007) istaknuo: »ako ste otvoreni, okruženje će vam neprestano govoriti što trebate naučiti« (Slunjski, 2011, str. 140). Odgojitelji/ce smatraju da imaju iskustvo u radu, ali da im treba osigurati permanentno usavršavanje i upoznavanje s novostima koje se primjećuju u razvijenim obrazovnim sustavima, te da je neophodno stvoriti bolje uvjete za rad u vrtiću i prilikom upisa se pridržavati normativa o brojnosti djece u skupini kako bi se unaprijedila kvaliteta rada. Odgojiteljice su općenito zadovoljne programima stručnog usavršavanja koje nudi Zavod za školstvo, ali nisu zadovoljne dinamikom i načinom na koji se oni organiziraju. Po mišljenju odgojiteljica, posebno iz sjeverne i južne regije, trebalo bi organizirati minimalno 3 do 4 seminara tijekom godine za sve odgojitelje po institucijama u kojima rade, jer bi to bio značajan doprinos kvaliteti stručnog usavršavanja odgojitelja u svim vrtićima bez obzira na grad ili regiju u kojoj rade.

Zaključci i preporuke

Kvaliteta organizacije odgojno-obrazovnog procesa ovisi o više faktora: sustavnih pretpostavki, stručno-profesionalne zrelosti i kompetentnosti odgojiteljica, uvjeta i resursa za ostvarenje programskih ciljeva. Rezultati istraživanja su pokazali da je brojnost djece u skupinama različita i da u značajnoj mjeri premašuje pedagoške standarde, (približno 50% promatranih skupina imalo je više od 24 djece u skupini, a 28,2% čak više od 30 djece u skupini) s napomenom da se taj broj odnosio na trenutno prisutan broj djece u vremenu promatranja, a na osnovi uvida u upisnu listu taj je broj u svim skupinama znatno veći. Spomenuta prekobrojnost odgojnih skupina svakako utječe na kvalitetu i domete organizacije i realizacije odgojno-obrazovnih aktivnosti. Analizom istraživačkih nalaza zaključujemo da u praksi dominira kategorija *kvalitetna praksa*, slijedi je kategorija *dobar početak*, a kategorije *neadekvatno* i *korak dalje* približno su uravnotežene bilo da je riječ o *interakciji*, *poštivanju različitosti* i *demokratskih vrijednosti*, *primjenjivoj strategiji poučavanja*, *kreiranju okruženja za učenje* ili *planiranju odgojno-obrazovnog rada*.

Na kraju, na temelju dobivenih istraživačkih podataka, možemo tvrditi da je u odgojno-obrazovnoj praksi predškolskih ustanova u Crnoj Gori došlo do značajnih promjena u pravcu uspostavljanja kompleksnije, višesmjerne komunikacije i interakcije između svih sudionika u ustanovi, kao i da se uloga odgojitelja očituje u neizravnoj podršci učenju i razvoju djece. Stoga se od odgojitelja, kao autonomnog profesionalca i istraživača/kreatora vlastite prakse, očekuje da djeluje u skladu s kontekstualnim potrebama te individualiziraju vlastite odgojne postupke, temeljeći ih na razumijevanju djeteta i njegova procesa učenja. Pokazalo se da na mijenjanje "osobnih paradigmi"

praktičara najveći utjecaj može imati sama praksa ako je praktičari istraže, upoznaju, bolje razumiju i na bazi toga mijenjaju i unapređuju. U tom smislu govorimo o potrebi razvijanja intersubjektivnosti, koja određuje perspektivu zajedničkog učenja i razumijevanja znanja između djece i odraslih (Slunjski, 2011, str. 106).

Uzimajući u obzir prikazane rezultate opservacije u istraživanju i identificirane probleme/izazove, do kojih smo u intervjuu došli, možemo predložiti sljedeće mjere koje bi doprinijele unapređenju kvalitete rada u odgojno-obrazovnom procesu u predškolskim ustanovama na svim dobnim razinama:

- uskladiti brojnost djece u odgojnim skupinama po dobi s pedagoškim standardima i dosljednije ih poštivati u praksi
- osigurati kontinuitet stručnog usavršavanja za sve odgojitelje/ce, bez obzira na regiju ili grad u kojem rade
- izraditi priručnike za reformirani program po područjima aktivnosti koji je usklađen sa suvremenim zahtjevima razvijenih obrazovnih sustava.
- osigurati kontinuiranu podršku stručnjaka i asistenata u radu s djecom s posebnim potrebama
- opremiti radne prostore novim didaktičkim materijalom i suvremenom tehnologijom
- sustavno unaprijediti poziciju odgojno-obrazovnog procesa na razini cjelovitog obrazovnog i društvenog konteksta u crnogorskoj sredini
- unaprijediti i funkcionalizirati dokumentaciju koja prati odgojni proces, jer se time može probuditi uvid u dječje individualne potrebe, a zatim i oblikovati primjerenije i djelotvornije odgojno-obrazovne strategije u radu sa djecom
- približiti kurikulum životnom kontekstu, ciljeve odrediti iz kuta djeteta, teme učiniti operativnijim, bolje „omeđenim“, bližim kontekstu i djetetu; proširiti programsku ponudu za djecu
- stimulirati istraživanje prakse, otvorenost ustanove „unutra i izvana“, kao i angažirati sve zainteresirane strane intenzivnije, planski i funkcionalno, jer je vrtić „živi sustav“ (Fullan, 2000, str. 106)
- unaprijediti suradničko, timsko djelovanje odgajatelja u cilju sveobuhvatnog unpređivanja kvalitete života u predškolskoj ustanovi
- afirmirati autonomiju vrtića, koji teži samoobnovi i kontinuiranoj transformaciji
- reartikulirati osobna gledišta odgajatelja, kako promjene u praksi ne bi bile samo površne (Slunjski, 2011, str. 139).
- unaprijediti suradnju predškolske institucije s vanjskim okruženjem, tj. otvoriti kurikulum za ideje svih sudionika koji ne/posredno participiraju u životu vrtića i pridonose demokratizaciji odgojnog procesa. To je jedini put transformacije vrtića u mjesto zajedničkog kvalitetnog učenja i življenja.